

PRESIDENTS OF U.S.

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COMPARISONS



# Abraham Lincoln Comparisons

Presidents of the U.S.

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1918

# How the Presidents of the U. S. Have Carried The Worries of Our Wars

*WASHINGTON, Commander in Chief of Our Armies in the Revolution, Had His Troubles With Congress, Graft, Spies and Tories—ADAMS, in the Brief War With France, Had Factions to Reconcile—MADISON, in 1812, Fought an Unpopular War, Hampered by Pacifists and Secessionists—POLK, in the War With Mexico, Was Weaker Than His Problems—LINCOLN, in the Civil War, Had Foes North and South and a Divided Country to Reunite—M'KINLEY, in the War With Spain, Had the Handicap of Unpreparedness.*

By Albert Payson Terhune

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**S**HIPYARD snarls, Congressional squabbles, anti-Administration cabals, pacifism, foreign spies, transportation muddles, railroads, munition supplies, obstructionists of every breed—these are a few of the problems that make President Wilson's job look like the hardest in all history.

It is a job, of course, that calls for thirty hours' work a day and for ninety hours of planning per night. It is probably the very toughest job on record. But our country has never yet had a war, big or little, which did not throw upon the shoulders of the President an avalanche of problems almost as great, in their way, as those that Wilson is tackling.

Lincoln, of course, comes to mind first; with the mighty problems that stamped upon his face and soul a melancholy that never was effaced. At the very dawn of Lincoln's Presidency, the Union split in two. And his life-problem was to piece it together again. Not only had he to face the open foe at the South, but the rank Copperhead and Obstructionist and Pro-Slavery Party at the North. The draft was needful. Yet it brought on bloody riots. Extremists of both parties were forever clamoring in his ears and pointing out a dozen divergent roads for his policy to travel. Assassination plots were rife. So were conspiracies to kidnap the President.

**A**DDED to all this was the harder problem of preventing European nations from forming alliances with the South against the Union. As knotty was the problem of the "psychological moment" for declaring the slaves free. By being too early or too late with the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln knew the document's value would be destroyed. The last and most tremendous problem of all was that of building up and welding the reunited country at the Civil War's end. Lincoln was at work on that Herculean task when a bullet drove the solution into other and less capable hands.

The War of 1812 threatened to divide our country and forever to wreck the Union. Not through the power of the foe, but through the machinations of American factions. The war was unpopular from the start. President Madison had not only the problem of fighting the invaders, but of keeping whole sections of the United States from seceding. New England (though it was the cradle of American liberty) openly hinted at secession if the war were pressed. Yankee troops, so

to invade Canada, halted at the border, stubbornly refusing to set foot on foreign soil. Pacifists everywhere clogged the Government's movements. The "Indian question," too, was revived as an active war issue. Madison was cursed as a coward and still more loudly cursed as a Jingolst. The army was in a wretched state of unpreparedness.

During the Revolution, of course, there was no President. But George Washington, as Commander-in-Chief, was assailed by practically every problem that now confronts Wilson. A Congressional cabal impeded his every step. Opposition statesmen assailed him. He had to crush graft in a score of forms. He could not make people cut down their living expenses to help feed the army. Spies were everywhere. Pacifists vied with Tories to wreck him. As for preparedness—except among a few wise patriots it was a joke.

After the Revolution was won and Washington came to the Presidency a new war problem staggered him. England was at war with France. A strong party in the United States demanded that we take sides in the conflict. Washington refused, warning the country against "entangling foreign alliances." He was barely able to keep us out of the war. And as a reward he was sneered at in the public prints as cowardly and ungrateful. In despair he said:

"I have only once regretted accepting the Presidency. And that was every moment since I took office!"

His successor, John Adams, met with a like set of problems during our very brief sea war with France. Again the country was rent into factions, which Adams had to reconcile as best he could. He was making very heavy weather of it when the war came to an abrupt end through a change of rulership in France.

THE Mexican War gave President James K. Polk a series of problems that threw himself and his whole political party out of power. For he was a politician, not a true statesman. And he dealt with his problems after the selfish fashion of an uninspired politician. The war was unpopular with the country at large. It was hard to make men enlist. It was harder to stir up a single thrill of national enthusiasm. The new-born war threatened to injure the prestige of Polk and of his party. He met this problem by trying to discredit his political foes. He did it by sending the other party's best man down to Mexico at the head of a ridiculously small force (about 4,000 men) to wage the war, unsupported, against all Mexico. Thus the brunt of failure and of unpopularity would fall on this man and on his party.

The man he sent was Zachary Taylor, who proceeded to win a series of brilliant victories against terrible odds. These victories made Taylor a national hero and buried Polk in oblivion. The opposition elected Taylor President by a huge majority.

You recall, don't you, the problems that beset McKinley before and during and after the Spanish War of 1898? First, whether or not to yield to the popular clamor for war, and to sift justice out of a mass of conflicting testimony. Then he had to cope with a rank unpreparedness that sent men to the tropics in thick clothes and with damaged rations and bad hospital facilities. Next came the wrangles between commanders (as in the Schley-Sampson controversy), which must be adjudicated. And, after that, the status of the Cuba we had freed and of the Philippines we had bought. As in Lincoln's case, an assassin's bullet took the final settlement of these tangles out of McKinley's hands.

In other and lesser wars our Presidents have had other (and perhaps lesser) problems to fight. And so it must be while warfare endures upon the earth. The glory of being a war President is a million times offset by the problems that are well nigh above the power of uninspired human brains to solve.

The President who accomplishes most—not necessarily the President who makes fewest natural blunders—is the man whom history crowns as Immortal.

# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.  
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## PRESIDENTS BEFORE AND AFTER LINCOLN

### Comments by Lincoln on the 15 Presidents Who Preceded Him

1. **GEORGE WASHINGTON**—"Washington is the mightiest name on earth . . . In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked deathless splendor leave it shining on."—*Address, Feb. 22, 1842.*
2. **JOHN ADAMS**—"The two men most distinguished in the framing and support of the Declaration were Thomas Jefferson and John Adams—the one having penned it and the other sustained it the most forcible in debate—the only two of the fifty-five who signed it who were elected Presidents of the United States."—*Response to Serenade, July 7, 1863.*
3. **THOMAS JEFFERSON**—"It is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this nation . . . The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society and yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success."—*Letter, April 6, 1859.*
4. **JAMES MADISON**—"The first national bank was established chiefly by the same men who formed the Constitution . . . it received the sanction, as President, of Mr. Madison to whom common consent has awarded the proud title of 'Father of the Constitution.'"—*Circular, March 4, 1843.*
5. **JAMES MONROE**—"Almost every good man since the formation of our government has uttered that sentiment . . . from General Washington, who 'trusted that we should yet have a confederacy of free states' with Jefferson, Jay, Monroe, down to the latest days."—*Address, March 6, 1860.*
6. **JOHN QUINCY ADAMS**—"The last year of J. Q. Adams' administration cost, in round numbers, thirteen millions being about one dollar to each soul in the nation."—*Speech, December 20, 1839.*
7. **ANDREW JACKSON**—"By the eternal. 'I take the responsibility.' Those were the 'Samson locks' of General Jackson, and we dare not disregard the lessons of experience."—*Letter, July 28, 1849.*
8. **MARTIN VAN BUREN**—"His prayers were for the restoration of the authority of the government of which he had been the head, and for peace and good will among his fellow citizens."—*General Order No. 89, July 25, 1862.*
9. **WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON**—"With the gallant Harrison at our head, we shall meet our foes and conquer them in all parts of the Union."—*Circular, Jan. 1, 1840.*
10. **JOHN TYLER**—No favorable comment discovered.
11. **JAMES KNOX POLK**—No favorable comment discovered.
12. **ZACHARY TAYLOR**—"General Taylor himself, the noblest Roman of them all, has declared that as a citizen and particularly as a soldier it is sufficient for him to know that his country is at war with a foreign nation, to do all in his power to bring it to a speedy and honorable termination."—*Speech, July 27, 1848.*
13. **MILLARD FILMORE**—"In Congress, placed at the head of one of the most important committees, and as its chairman, was the principal member of the House of Representatives in maturing the Tariff of 1842."—*Speeches, August 14 and 26, 1852.*
14. **FRANKLIN PIERCE**—"I have only to say that, General Pierce's history being as it is, the attempt to set him up as a great general is simply ludicrous and laughable; and that the free merry people of this country have laughed at it and will continue to laugh at it."—*Addresses, August 14 and 26, 1852.*
15. **JAMES BUCHANAN**—"Buchanan is the hard horse to beat in this race (campaign of 1856.) Let him have Illinois and nothing can beat him."—*Letter, Sept. 8, 1856.*

### Comments on Lincoln by the 15 Presidents Who Followed Him

1. **ANDREW JOHNSON**—"When future generations shall read the history of the second revolutionary crisis . . . Abraham Lincoln will stand out as the greatest man of the age."—*Tribute.*
2. **ULYSSES S. GRANT**—"A man of great ability, pure patriotism, unselfish nature, full of forgiveness to his enemies, bearing malice towards none . . . His fame will grow brighter as time passes and his great work is better understood."—*Manuscript, 1880.*
3. **RUTHERFORD B. HAYES**—"Lincoln's fame is safe. He is the darling of history forevermore. His life and achievements give him titles to regard second to those of no other man in ancient or modern times."—*Letter, April 16, 1865.*
4. **JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD**—"He was one of the few great rulers whose wisdom increased with his power, and whose spirit grew gentler and tenderer as his triumphs were multiplied."—*Address, Feb. 12, 1878.*
5. **CHESTER ALAN ARTHUR**  
(No tribute discovered.)
6. **GROVER CLEVELAND**—"He was called to save a nation . . . He too loved the country. He who made the country gave him in compensation, an unstinted measure of inspiration for the most impressive and solemn public duty."—*Youth Companion, Feb. 8, 1906.*
7. **BENJAMIN HARRISON**—"He stands like a great lighthouse to show the way of duty to all his countrymen and to send afar a beam of courage to those who beat against the winds."—*Eulogy, Feb. 12, 1898.*
8. **WILLIAM McKINLEY**—"A thousand years hence no story, no tragedy, no epic poem, will be filled with greater words than that which tells of his life and death."—*Address, Feb. 12, 1896.*
9. **THEODORE ROOSEVELT**—"The lover of his country and all mankind; the mightiest of the mighty men who mastered the mighty days."—*Address, Feb. 12, 1909.*
10. **WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT**—"The oppressed and lowly of all peoples, as liberty and free government spread, pronounce his name with awe . . . This harmony of his message with every popular aspiration of freedom proves his universality."—*Address, May 30, 1922.*
11. **WOODROW WILSON**—"As he stands there in his complete manhood at the most perilous helm of Christendom what a marvelous composite figure he is! The whole country is summed up in him."—*Forum Magazine, Feb., 1894.*
12. **WARREN GAMALIEL HARDING**—"We are dealing with the master martyr, the supreme leader in a national crisis, the surpassing believer in a fulfilled destiny, and a colossal figure among the hero-statesmen of all ages."—*Address, Feb. 12, 1923.*
13. **CALVIN COOLIDGE**—"His presence filled the nation. He broke the might of oppression. He restored a race to its birthright. His mortal fame has vanished, but his spirit increased with the increasing years, the richest legacy of the greatest century."—*Proclamation, Feb. 12, 1926.*
14. **HERBERT CLARK HOOVER**—"Lincoln after all these years still grows not only in the hearts of his countrymen but in the hearts of the people of the world."—*Address, June 17, 1931.*
15. **FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT**—"With his charity and kindness, his insight and humor, his endurance and faith, has come to be the exemplar of our American life."—*Manuscript, Feb. 13, 1935.*

July 23, 1964

### PRESIDENTS

This article might be entitled "Every Twenty Years," or "What Happened to Our Presidents."

The facts are familiar to many persons, but may be new to others.

In 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected President. In 1865 he was assassinated.

In 1880 James A. Garfield was elected President. In 1881 he was assassinated.

In 1900 William McKinley was elected President. In 1901 he was assassinated.

In 1920 Warren G. Harding was elected President. In 1923 he died in office.

In 1940 Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected for a third term as President. In 1945, in his fourth term, he died in office.

In 1960 John F. Kennedy was elected President. In 1963 he was assassinated.

## PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

There is much interest in comparing the physical characteristics of the Presidents at the time when they were inaugurated or assumed office.

As contemporary reports vary and as writers interpret according to their own impressions, many conflicting reports exist. The description of a Republican President by a Democrat may differ from one by a Republican, and even without bias due to politics, personal appraisals by different people may vary.

The following is a list of known characteristics:

### Washington

Height, 6 feet 2 inches; weight, 175 pounds; brown sandy hair, powdered, under powdered wig; blue eyes, high brow, scar on left cheek, black mole under right ear, pock-marked on nose and cheeks; strongly pointed chin; false teeth; powerful physique; broad sloping shoulders.

### J. Adams

Height, 5 feet 7 inches; corpulent; bald; expanded eyebrows.

### Jefferson

Height, 6 feet 2½ inches; sandy, reddish hair; prominent cheekbones and chin; large hands and feet.

### Madison

Height, 5 feet 4 inches (smallest President in stature), weight, about 100 pounds; blond hair; blue eyes; weak speaking voice.

### Monroe

Height, 6 feet, rugged physique, blue-gray eyes; well shaped nose, broad forehead; stooped shoulders.

### J. Q. Adams

Height, 5 feet 7 inches; bald.

### Jackson

Height, 6 feet 1 inch; thin; weight, 140 pounds; bushy iron-gray hair, brushed high above forehead; clear, dark blue eyes; prominent eyebrows.

### Van Buren

Height, 5 feet 6 inches; small, erect, slender; red and graying hair, bald spot; deep wrinkles.

### W. H. Harrison

Height, 5 feet 8 inches; long, thin face, irregular features.

### Tyler

Height, 6 feet; thin; light brown hair; blue eyes; light complexion; high-bridged nose.

### Polk

Height, 5 feet 8 inches; nearly white hair, worn long; sharp gray eyes; high forehead; thin, angular brow.

### Taylor

Height, 5 feet 8 inches; weight, 170 pounds; black hair; gray eyes, squint; ruddy complexion; short legs in proportion to body.

### Fillmore

Height, 5 feet 9 inches; finely proportioned body; thin, grayish hair; blue eyes; light complexion; smooth forehead; well-developed chest.

### Pierce

Height, 5 feet 10 inches; erect bearing; penetrating dark gray eyes; small but strong features; stiff military carriage.

### Buchanan

Height, 6 feet; imperfect vision; light complexion; protruding chin; short neck; muscular appearance.

### Lincoln

Height, 6 feet 4 inches (tallest President); weight, 180 pounds; beard; black hair; gray eyes.

### A. Johnson

Height, 5 feet 10 inches; stocky; brown hair, worn long; light eyes; high forehead.

### Grant

Height, 5 feet 8½ inches; beard; square, straight brows; large head; heavy nostrils; firm-set mouth.

### Hayes

Height, 5 feet 8½ inches; weight, 170 pounds; dark brown hair; sandy red beard; deeply set blue eyes; large head, high forehead, straight nose, circling brows; mild but very audible voice.

### Garfield

Height, 6 feet; light brown, graying hair, receding hair line; beard; blue eyes; large head, high forehead; strong frame, broad shoulders; left-handed.

### Arthur

Height, 6 feet 2 inches; full side whiskers and mustache; handsome appearance, well-proportioned body.

### Cleveland

Height, 5 feet 11 inches; weight, 260 pounds, corpulent; graying hair, growing bald; heavy, drooping mustache; short neck.

### B. Harrison

Height, 5 feet 6 inches; blond, graying hair; full beard; small, bright blue eyes; short neck; short legs.

### McKinley

Height, 5 feet 7 inches; high forehead, receding hair line; prominent chin; broad forehead.

### T. Roosevelt

Height, 5 feet 10 inches; pince-nez eyeglasses with thick lenses, prominent teeth; bushy eyebrows; drooping mustache; high voice.

### Taft

Height, 6 feet; huge frame; weight, 300-332 pounds; deep-set eyes; ruddy complexion; turned-up mustache.

### Wilson

Height, 5 feet 11 inches; weight, 170 pounds; eyeglasses; clean-cut, ascetic face.

### Harding

Height, 6 feet; high forehead; graying hair; bushy eyebrows.

### Coolidge

Height, 5 feet 10 inches; large, clear forehead; thin nose; tightly set lips.

### Hoover

Height, 5 feet 11 inches; square-faced; ruddy complexion.

### F. D. Roosevelt

Height, 6 feet 2 inches; weight, 188 pounds; high forehead; graying hair; occasionally wore eyeglasses; wore braces on his legs.

### Truman

Height, 5 feet 9 inches; weight, 167 pounds; receding steel gray hair, parted on left; hazel eyes; eyeglasses with thick lenses.

### Eisenhower

Height, 5 feet 10½ inches; weight, 168-173 pounds; bald, with fringe of sandy, graying hair; blue eyes; ruddy complexion; engaging smile.

### Kennedy

Height, 6 feet; weight, 170-175 pounds; dark red hair; handsome appearance.

### L. B. Johnson

Height, 6 feet 3 inches; weight, 200 pounds; eyeglasses occasionally.

### Nixon

Height, 5 feet 11½ inches; receding hair line; bushy eyebrows; upswept nose; jutting jaw.

From: *Facts About The Presidents* (3rd Edition) 1974

By: Joseph Nathan Kane

### Gerald R. Ford, Jr.

Ford is more than 6 feet tall, and he maintains the sharp, erect bearing and broad shoulders of a former athlete. Even at 61, he keeps his weight at 203 only 4 pounds over his football playing weight of 40 years ago. He has deep blue eyes and thinning, graying, blond hair. His nose, according to a veteran Grand Rapids reporter, was "obviously damaged on the football field". His admirers claim there is a close resemblance between Ford and George Washington.

From: *The People's Almanac* (1975)

.... NEWS .... NEWS .... NEWS .... from .....

American Optometric Association

7000 Chippewa Street  
St. Louis, Missouri 63119  
314 832-5770

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE---

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, November 22, 1976---More than half of all Americans wear eyeglasses today but you would never know it by looking at U. S. Presidents.

With few exceptions, according to an article in the October, 1976, issue of the Journal of the American Optometric Association, U. S. Presidents have notoriously avoided appearing in public wearing spectacles, although all have had them.

There have been nearsighted presidents, such as Gerald Ford, Franklin Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt and Rutherford B. Hayes. There have been farsighted presidents, such as George Washington, John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Harry Truman and President-elect Jimmy Carter. And then there was James Buchanan, who was nearsighted in one eye and farsighted in the other.

Seldom, however, have the American people seen their presidents with their spectacles in place.

Lincoln was embarrassed to wear his at first. Eisenhower's never fit well. Kennedy, like a good many more, was too vain, although he only needed his for protracted reading. Washington, like the rest of the early presidents, could not see well with his on anyway.

Of course, there were exceptions. Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman could not see without their eyeglasses. Wilson's spectacles fit well with his intellectual image which was perhaps fortunate, since retinal detachment had left him with badly impaired sight.

The lives of both T. Roosevelt and Truman were probably largely influenced by wearing glasses. Roosevelt, who began wearing glasses at age 13, turned from a sickly introvert to a raging extrovert.

Truman, who wore eyeglasses from age six, had to suffer and overcome the jeers of his playmates. To biographer Merle Miller (author of Plain Speaking), Truman said, "Of course, they (playmates) called me four-eyes and a lot of other things, too. That's hard on a boy. It makes him lonely, and it gives him an inferiority complex, and he has a hard time overcoming it.

"Of course we didn't know what an inferiority complex was in those days. But you can overcome it. You've got to fight for everything you do. You've got to be above those calling you names, and you've got to do more work than they do, but it usually comes out all right in the end."

Thomas Jefferson was the only U. S. President who wrote his own eyeglass prescriptions and it is evident from his written orders to his optician that he liked to have several different pairs handy.

Jefferson's penchant for several pairs of eyeglasses was shared by T. Roosevelt, who took 12 pairs of his favorite pince-nez with him to the Spanish-American war. President Ford has his military aide carry a spare for him. In addition, he keeps spares on hand at Camp David, Vail, Grand Rapids and in Air Force One.

Mr. Ford doesn't wear his glasses at press conferences because he considers himself well enough acquainted with the press corps that he can identify them without actually seeing what they are writing on their note pads. When it comes to tracking his tee shot on the golf course, however, he does wear his glasses.

The president who had the most vision problems was Lincoln. In addition to farsightedness, he had crossed eyes and an eye coordination problem, which sometimes caused double vision.

Cataracts affected John Adams, John Quincy Adams, James Madison and Andrew Jackson in their declining years. In the last year of his life, cataracts robbed John Adams of his ability to read.

Both Zachary Taylor and James Buchanan would have benefited greatly from today's optometric care. Taylor suffered from strabismus and he developed the compensating habit of partially closing his divergent eye when talking to somebody close at hand.

Buchanan, who suffered some eye muscle paralysis, had the unnatural habit of cocking his head sharply to one side when talking. His political enemies insisted this was due to an injury suffered when he tried to hang himself in the wake of his fiancee's sudden death in 1899.

Lyndon Johnson was the first U. S. President to wear contact lenses. Although many remember his difficulty with the lenses at a press conference, Johnson was able to wear them without trouble for two to three hours a day. He had to give them up after his gallbladder operation because he developed a nonspecific sensitivity to them.

While Johnson liked his eyeglass frames to fit very tight, Eisenhower did not. He was once counted pushing up his glasses 29 times with one hand and six times with both hands during one 1956

Reportedly, Eisenhower had a very difficult nose to fit, plus skin so hypersensitive that he could not tolerate either a snug fit or any of the pressure gadgets used to hold spectacles in place.

How much did U. S. Presidents pay for their eyeglasses?

Washington paid \$75 for his engraved, imported silver frames at a time when he could buy a full course meal for 25 cents. Lincoln paid 37-1/2 cents for his first pair. Shortly after he took up residence in the White House, Eisenhower paid \$23.50 for a pair of spectacles made to the prescription written by doctors at Walter Reed Hospital's Ophthalmology and Optometry section.

Today, U. S. Presidents receive their vision care and eyeglasses or contact lenses from the government as a job benefit.

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**WASHINGTON TALK**

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# Briefing

## *Presidential Roots*

Steeped as we are in the quadrennial foray over who will reside in the White House, the Smithsonian Institution Press has published a book in which historians take a look at former Presidents and their roots. Most occupants of the Oval Office, concludes the book, "Every Four Years," "arrived there through a combination of circumstance and happenstance, often with little preparation for the job."

Abraham Lincoln, according to one historian, Mark E. Neely, "had absolutely no executive or administrative experience." Harry S. Truman was a haberdasher whose business failed as he neared 40. Woodrow Wilson at 54 withdrew from the cloistered groves of academe to enter the political arena. The early Presidents — Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and John Quincy Adams — had patrician backgrounds. Andrew Jackson speculated in land and tolerated somewhat rowdy fêtes at the White House while Ulysses S. Grant is described by another historian, Michael Lawson, as showing "absolutely no distinction as a youth."

The bottom line, espoused by the book's editor, Robert Post, is, "Who knows what it takes to be qualified?" Left unresolved was whether a man as homely as Lincoln or a man with wooden teeth, George Washington, would be eliminated early in the modern race for the Presidency because of the fierce eye of the television camera.

## Burke's Issues Candid 'Peerage' of U.S. Presidents

By HERBERT MITGANG

**B**URKE'S Peerage, Baronetage and Knighthage, the last word in tracking the lineage of Britain's kings, queens, princes, dukes, knights, heirs-presumptive and presumptuous heirs, has finally crossed the Atlantic with a definitive edition about the closest to royalty that America has — the American Presidents, from Washington to Reagan.

The London firm that has put out the bible of the British pedigree class since 1826 calls its American version Burke's Presidential Families of the United States of America. It has been edited by Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, and it includes the ancestry, wives, siblings, descendants and remarkably frank comments about the Chief Executives. Furthermore, in an editorial reach for objectivity, and perhaps for readers below the Mason-Dixon Line, there is an appendix that includes the life and lineage of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America.

The biographical section on Ronald Wilson Reagan, 41st, 40th President of the United States of America, 1981, includes these observations about him that appear unusually blunt for a historical reference book:

"Not surprisingly, he began to cast his gaze toward the White House while he was still in the governor's house in Sacramento. He attempted belatedly to

secure the Republican presidential nomination in 1968. He supported the re-election of Richard Nixon in 1972 — when Nixon was, of course, certain of renomination. He professed his faith in President Nixon up to the brink of Nixon's resignation.

"By then, Ronald Reagan was a powerful Republican chief. Though unsuccessful in his campaign against President Ford in 1976, he and his advisers began to lay their plans for 1980. This time he defeated Ford, sealing his victory at the Republican convention in Detroit after a long run of primary successes. His acceptance speech at Detroit impressed even the millions of Americans who still visualized Ronald Reagan as an aging ham actor with a slight look of Mickey Mouse, a bizarre manifestation from the crazy state of California, possibly with sinister tendencies toward reactionary-fringe politics."

The comments on President Carter, while acknowledging his personal integrity and achievements, such as bringing together Egypt and Israel at Camp David, also have a bite: He was "unduly tolerant of failings among his friends and family"; he and his advisers were "ignorantly naive" in dealing with Congress; the only talent of the White House staff was in "political campaigning"; and "Jimmy Carter had no clearcut opinions or policies."

There are also outspoken views of most of the other Presidents.

On President Nixon: "He was never able to live down the charge that some

moral dimension was lacking in his character."

On President Kennedy: "He committed the nation to an unwholesome conception of global responsibility of which the Vietnam war was the fruit. If he had lived, he might have avoided some of the pitfalls that awaited his successor."

On President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "He would have been amused to discover that he was to be accused of both giving way too easily at Casablanca, Yalta and Teheran, and of plotting an anti-Communist American imperium. The truth may be that, being human, he did not exactly know what he was aiming at, beyond ending the war."

President Wilson: "His vision of the world made safe for democracy, whatever its defects of detail, was more wholesome than the cautious optimism of his opponents."

President Lincoln: "A man of apparently middling ability was thrust into a nightmare for which no amount of previous American training could have adequately prepared him. Lincoln revealed a felicity of language that any writer might envy and that no President has surpassed. He was the plain man transfigured, the American democrat raised to glory."

President Jefferson: "He was well aware that the history of mankind was in large part a record of greed, violence, stupidity. But Jefferson kept alive his essential faith that America could inaugurate a new, far happier era in the world's chronicle."

President Washington: "He knew he was less clever and less sophisticated than a Hamilton or a Jefferson. But he was uniquely the right man in the right place. He was aware that the new 'Federal City' would be named Washington. The man deserved the honor. Skeptics of a later age might ask: Has the city always been equally deserving?"

Work of Marcus Cunliffe

These opinionated biographical comments are the work of Marcus Cunliffe and of his former wife, Lesley Hume Cunliffe, an American. Professor Cunliffe, long with the Universities of Manchester and Sussex, educated his fellow Britons about the United States in lectures and in such books as "American Presidents and the Presidency." He now holds a university professorship at George Washington University in Washington.

"I had a few uneasy moments with some of the material," Professor Cunliffe said. "I wanted to make sure of the accuracy and origin of a phrase such as 'the happy warrior' that was used by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he nominated Alfred E. Smith for President in 1928. But I have some of the instincts of a journalist and, with the help of other scholars from Burke's, we were able to bring the book up to the 40th President."

The "pedigrees" of the Presidents, as they are called in the book, were compiled by David Williamson, who has worked for Burke's for some 30

years. With the help of an American genealogist, Gary Boyd Roberts, the lineages of the Presidents were traced in some cases with even greater knowledge than that known by the descendants themselves.

Mr. Williamson said that it was fairly easy to find President Reagan's English grandmother, Mary Ann Elsey (1843-1908), who was originally from Epsom, Surrey, by looking up church records, census returns and the General Registrar Office, which began in England in 1837 and includes all births, marriages and deaths. President Reagan's ancestry is one-fourth English, one-fourth Scottish, one-half Irish.

As for President Jefferson Davis, "To the end of his days he refused to ask for a federal pardon — preserving the fiction that he was still a citizen of a Confederate nation which now existed only as an imperfect memory."

Burke's on the Presidents is distributed here by the British Book Centre, a division of Pergamon Press of Elmsford, N. Y. It has 712 pages and costs \$69.95.

NY Daily News 1/11/82

# Presidential timber: Say Abe was tallest

Chicago (UPI)—Abraham Lincoln was the best President ever, and Warren Harding was the worst, a survey of 49 historians and political scholars says. Richard Nixon came in second—from the bottom.

The survey, conducted for the Chicago Tribune Magazine, rated the 10 best and 10 worst Presidents.

George Washington was listed as the second-best chief executive; Franklin Roosevelt, third; Theodore Roosevelt, fourth; Thomas Jefferson, fifth; Woodrow Wilson, sixth; Andrew Jackson, seventh; Harry Truman, eighth; Dwight Eisenhower, ninth, and James Polk, 10th.

In the worst category, James Buchanan was third; Franklin Pierce, fourth; Ulysses Grant, fifth; Millard Fillmore, sixth; Andrew Johnson, seventh; Calvin Coolidge, eighth; John Tyler, ninth, and Jimmy Carter, 10th.

Ronald Reagan, the 40th President, was not included in the survey because he is in his first year of office.

THE TRIBUNE SENT questionnaires to leading historians and political scholars across the country in November. The results were computed by IMBI, a Washington data processing firm.

The Presidents were judged on their leadership qualities, accomplishments, crisis management, political skill, appointments and character.



Lincoln



Harding



Washington



Nixon

"The best Presidents have been strong political leaders with a vision, if not a complete program, of where they think the country should go to preserve, protect and sometimes advance the liberty and rights of all people," said Robert V. Remini, history professor at the University of Illinois.

"The worst Presidents have usually lacked this vision," he said. "They simply drifted or were so inept in their relations with the people and Congress as to frustrate any effort toward achieving their goals."

## Time to Make or Break

MATTHEW B. BRADY COURTESY FREDERICK H. MESERVE



Abraham Lincoln: the tiredness inside

There was talk of impeachment in Abraham Lincoln's third year, and one Senator told of the President's possessing "an unhuman sadness." Lincoln confided to a friend: "The tired part of me is inside and out of reach." But that was the year he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, gave the Gettysburg Address, and realized General Ulysses S. Grant should lead his army.

During Richard Nixon's third year, with the Viet Nam War effort failing and inflation rising, there was speculation about his being a one-term President. His response was what became known as the "Nixon shocks." He devalued the dollar, imposed wage and price controls, and announced he would visit China.

In Thomas Jefferson's third year, his cautious efforts to resolve peacefully the control of the Mississippi River brought suggestions that he had lost his nerve and even his character. When France offered to sell the entire Louisiana territory to the U.S., Jefferson's envoys grabbed it, and the President joyfully endorsed the acquisition. Tragedy was transformed into triumph.

Jimmy Carter holed up at Camp David midway through his third year and proclaimed a national malaise. His remedy consisted of new energy programs and new Cabinet officers. Something stirred inside George Washington during his third year, and he left Philadelphia for two months on a tour of the Southern states, meticulously noting the beautiful belles he encountered along the way ("about 70" in Newbern, "62" in Wilmington and "at least 400" in Charleston).

Woodrow Wilson, desperate to avoid being pulled into World War I, awoke one morning in his third year to the news that the *Lusitania* had been torpedoed by Germany without warning and dozens of Americans had died. He had contended that the U.S. was "too proud to fight" and "so right" that it did not need to use force. Theodore Roosevelt had a word for Wilson's position: yellow. Wilson and America then were swept along by events.

And now Ronald Reagan faces his third year. History is never a perfect guide, but there does seem to be a tide that crests in the penultimate year of a President's first term. Providence plays a part, but so do more concrete factors. A President's programs often can be clearly judged in his third year. He is known as a person, his faults uncovered, and his strengths measured. The office has an effect: after two years it has either toughened or weakened its holder. Leaders of other nations have also had time to come to conclusions about the President and take actions that affect the U.S. Virtually all the pollsters, including Reagan's expert, Richard Wirthlin, believe that in the third year public opinion, the essence of power, often tilts irretrievably for or against a President.

Unlike Lincoln, Reagan does not seem tired inside. He still rejects Carter's notion of a paralyzing national malaise. The world does not view him as weak, though it often regards him as stubborn and ignorant. The prevailing wisdom among the fallible Washington seers is that Reagan faces more hazards in his third year than any recent President. His programs have not worked so far. An international banking crisis looms, along with rising fears about nuclear war.

A caution: the old clichés about silver linings in black clouds have some basis in historical fact. In turmoil and crisis there is opportunity. Intense challenge can inspire or overwhelm. Which way? Reagan has not said a word to his aides about the third-year mythology. No plans are being made to count beautiful belles in the Southern states. No troublesome territories are up for sale. Every indication is that long meditations at Camp David bore him. He would rather watch movies on a mountaintop. So we have fewer clues than usual to the crucial third year of the presidency. And we have a fascinating year ahead.

# It Can Be Told — Presidents Are Bold

By MICHAEL KILIAN  
Chicago Tribune

President Reagan's stern response to the Soviet destruction of a civilian jetliner — giving up our vital consulate in Kiev, canceling a cultural exchange agreement, expressing "grave concern" to Foreign Minister Gromyko — is not unprecedented. Throughout our history, American presidents have acted just as boldly and courageously.

It was 1804. The Barbary Coast pirates were shaking down the United States for protection money on the Mediterranean Sea. At a banquet, someone rose in toast and said: "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute?" Sparked by the cry of "millions," work was begun on what would ultimately become the B-1 bomber, though then it was just a kite with a round bomb hanging from it.

But the pirates only demanded more, seizing the frigate Philadelphia when they didn't get it. The Pasha of Tripoli figured that any nation that could spend money on a B-1 was far

from the bottom of the pocket. Boldly and courageously, President Jefferson sent Stephen Decatur into action.

"Give us back our ship, or we'll close our consulate in Tunisia!" Mr. Decatur said.

The Pasha scoffed.

"Give it back, or we won't let you come and do pirate dances at our international folk festival!" Mr. Decatur said, his anger increasing.

The Pasha sneered.

Then, preparing to sail back to the United States, Mr. Decatur uttered his most famous words of all: "OK for you guys!"

It was 1861. Secretary of the Navy William Seward burst into Abraham Lincoln's office with the news that the Confederates were shelling Ft. Sumter. Mr. Lincoln rose and smashed his fist down hard on the table.

"All right, we'll fix them!" he said. "I hereby ban the playing of 'Dixie' in all public squares."

"Ban 'Dixie'?" Mr. Seward said. "Can't we express grave concern, too?"

Mr. Lincoln put his arm around Mr. Seward and led him to the window, where a balloon was rising to the sky with a big round bomb dangling beneath.

"We can't risk war now, Bill," he said. "We need our defense money for the B-1."

It was 1898. Vice President Teddy Roosevelt galloped up to the White House with the news that the Spanish had blown up the battleship Maine in Havana harbor.

"Gosh," said President McKinley. "Does that mean no more flamenco-dancers?"

"Forget the Maine!" screamed the headlines of the Hearst papers. "Look," said someone. "Yellow journalism."

It was 1941. Plans for the B-1 now called for a supersonic jet that would carry a nuclear bomb while flying at tree-top level and would cost \$250 million a copy. President Roosevelt decided to move up production of the \$250,000 B-17 instead.

Just then, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. "If we had B-1s, we could take care of all those snipers hiding in the tree tops," Mr. Roosevelt said. "But I have something nearly as bold and courageous in mind. We'll call in their ambassador and express our grave concern."

"Not too grave," said Vice President Wallace. "We don't want to jeopardize the summit next year."

"This is a day that shall live in infamy!" said Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

"Now see here, Doug," said Mr. Roosevelt. "We and the Japanese have to live on the same planet. But you're right. We'll cancel the Kabuki concert, too."

It was 1979. In response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter ordered an embargo on grain sales to the Soviet Union, banned Aeroflot flights to New York and canceled U.S. participation in the 1980 Olympics.

"Aren't you being a little harsh?" asked Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. "Wouldn't it do just as well to give up our consulate in Kiev and embargo, say, hominy grit sales?"

"Remember, I'm the man who canceled the B-1 bomber. And I don't want the right wing calling me a cowardly wimp."



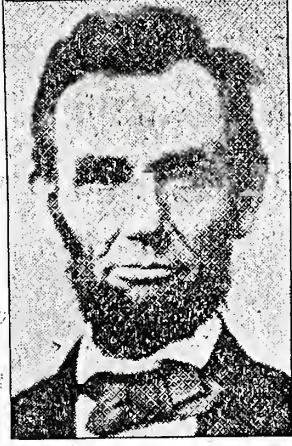
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**D**  
The Journal-Gazette  
Thursday  
January 17, 1985



Thomas Jefferson



Abraham Lincoln



Theodore Roosevelt



Franklin D. Roosevelt

## Memorable phrases from the past

United Press International

**W**

ASHINGTON — Memorable words from past inaugural addresses:

■ 1801, Thomas Jefferson — "Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. . . Let us then, with courage and confidence, pursue our own Federal and Republican principles, our attachment to union and representative government."

■ 1809, James Madison — On American objectives: "To cherish peace and friendly relations with all nations . . . to foster a spirit of independence too just to invade the rights of others, too proud to surrender our own."

■ 1861, Abraham Lincoln — To the Southern states: "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, lies the momentous issue of civil war."

can have no conflict without yourselves being the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I have the most solemn one 'to preserve, protect and defend it.'

■ 1865, Lincoln — "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

■ 1877, Rutherford B. Hayes — On helping the freed slaves: "Universal suffrage should rest on universal education. To this end, liberal and permanent provision should be made for the support of free schools by the state governments, and if need be, supplemented by legitimate aid

from the national authority."

■ 1901, William McKinley — On colonialism: "The American people, entrenched in freedom at home, take their love for it with them wherever they go. . . Our institutions will not deteriorate by extension, and our sense of justice will not abate under tropic suns in distant seas."

■ 1905, Theodore Roosevelt — "We are the heirs of the ages . . . a great nation compelled to play a major role among nations. We wish peace, but we wish the peace of justice, the peace of righteousness. We wish it because we think it is right and not because we are afraid."

■ 1913, Woodrow Wilson — "This is not a day of triumph, it is a day of dedication. Here muster not the forces of party, but the forces of humanity. Men's hearts wait upon us; men's lives hang in the balance; men's hopes call upon us to say what we would do."

■ 1929, Herbert Hoover — "I

have no fears for the future of the country. It is bright with hope."

■ 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt — "This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

■ 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt — "I see a great nation upon a great continent, blessed with great wealth of natural resources. Its 130 million people are at peace among themselves; they are making their country a good neighbor among nations."

■ 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt — "We have learned we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away. We have learned that we must live as men, not as ostriches,

See PAST, Page 2D.

# Quiz will test your knowledge of inaugurations

United Press International

**W**

ASHINGTON — In pursuit of golden anniversary inaugural trivia, here are a dozen questions about the ceremony at which the United States installs its presidents and vice presidents:

1. What president arrived in his inaugural city in a rowboat?
2. What presidents walked to their inaugurations?
3. Who gave the shortest and longest inaugural speeches?
4. What president took the oath of office at a White House party two days before the official inauguration?
5. In what presidents' inaugural parade did Buffalo Bill and Geronimo ride?
6. What president was sworn in by a former president?
7. At whose inauguration did the podium catch fire?
8. What inauguration had the worst snowstorm? The coldest weather?
9. What president was inaugurated in two cities?
10. What 20th-century president did not return to the White House after taking the oath at the Capitol?
11. What vice president got drunk before giving his inaugural speech?
12. What vice president was given the oath of office in Cuba?

## Answers

1. George Washington in 1789. He was rowed across New York harbor from Elizabeth, N.J., in a specially built 12-oared barge.
2. Thomas Jefferson in 1801 and Andrew Jackson in 1829.
3. Washington's 1793 speech was 135 words. William Henry Harrison's 1841 speech was 8,445 words.
4. Rutherford B. Hayes on Saturday, March 3, 1877.
5. Buffalo Bill was in Benjamin Harrison's 1889 parade; Geronimo in Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 parade.
6. Calvin Coolidge in 1925 was sworn in by Chief Justice and former President William Howard Taft.
7. A short circuit caused a fire in the podium at John Kennedy's 1961 inauguration.
8. The heaviest snowfall was 9.8 inches at W.H. Taft's 1909 inauguration. The coldest recorded temperature was 16 degrees at Ulysses Grant's 1873 inauguration.
9. Washington was inaugurated in New York in 1789 and in Philadelphia in 1793.
10. Harry Truman in 1949 returned to the Blair House. The White House was being renovated.
11. Andrew Johnson before the 1865 ceremony where he became Lincoln's vice president.
12. With the approval of Congress, William Rufus King took the oath in Cuba in 1853 where he was recuperating from an illness. He died before returning to the United States.



# Rand McNally Guide to the Presidents



(1988)

Item available in the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection at the  
Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana

For contact information, go to [www.LincolnCollection.org](http://www.LincolnCollection.org).

# Newsmakers

## Only the best



Anne

European royalty, long used to the best of everything, converged on Calvary late last week to watch the world's best athletes compete in the Winter Olympics. Britain's PRINCESS ANNE, one of five new members of the International Olympic Committee, will spend several days meeting with British athletes. Anne, the daughter of QUEEN

ELIZABETH II was an equestrian competitor in 1976. KING JUAN CARLOS of Spain and Norway's CROWN PRINCE HARALD arrived Friday and will be joined later by his wife, PRINCESS SONJA, IOC officials said.

PRINCE ALBERT of Monaco is in Calgary as a competitor in the two-man bobsled. His father, PRINCE RAINIER, will watch.

## On trial



Broderick

Actor MATTHEW BRODERICK goes on trial today in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, on charges of causing two deaths by reckless driving, and he faces up to five years in prison in convicted in the Aug. 5 accident. Broderick, the 25-year-old star of the box-office hits "WarGames" and "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" and the winner of a Tony award for his performance in the Broadway hit "Brighton Beach Memoirs," was on vacation in Ireland

with his girlfriend, actress JENNIFER GRAY, when the car he was driving collided with an oncoming vehicle. Anna Gallagher, 28, and her 60-year-old mother, Margaret Doherty, were killed in the collision and Broderick was hospitalized with a badly fractured leg.

## Cat in the Hat is back

The Cat in the Hat came back to New Orleans in the person of his well-tanned, fit-looking 83-year-old creator, THEODOR GEISEL, otherwise known as "Dr. Seuss." Accompanying Geisel were officials and patrons of the San Diego Museum of Art, which sponsored a touring retrospective of sketches, manuscripts and photographs that runs through April 10 at the New Orleans Museum of Art. Asked whether he considered himself a children's artist, Geisel said, "I'm not sure I'm an artist at all."

— From Wire Reports



Presidential cookie dusters: Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft.

## The last word in presidential trivia

By RICK SELVIN  
Of Knight-Ridder Newspapers

In honor of Presidents Day, which is today, we offer — compliments of "The World Almanac of Presidential Facts" (Pharos, \$9.95) by Lu Ann Paletta and Fred L. Worth — a few tidbits you can use to wow the gang at dinner.

✓ Victims of unsuccessful assassination attempts: Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt (as an ex-president), Franklin D. Roosevelt (as president-elect), Harry S. Truman, Gerald Ford (twice) and Ronald Reagan.

✓ Bald presidents: John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

✓ Bearded presidents: Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield and Benjamin Harrison.

✓ Presidents who had bad mustaches: Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.

✓ Presidents who had no children of their own: George Washington, James Madison, Andrew Jack-

son, James K. Polk and James Buchanan.

✓ Presidents who played football for their college teams: Dwight D. Eisenhower for the U.S. Military Academy, Richard M. Nixon for Whittier College, Gerald R. Ford for the University of Michigan and Ronald Reagan for Eureka College.

✓ Presidents who served as indentured servants: Millard Fillmore as a clothemaker and Andrew Jackson as a tailor.

✓ Presidents who did not attend college: George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Grover Cleveland and Harry S. Truman.

✓ Presidents who were only children: none.

✓ Last words of selected presidents? FDR: "I have a terrific headache." Calvin Coolidge: "Good morning, Robert." Woodrow Wilson: "Edith, I'm a broken machine, but I'm ready." Theodore Roosevelt: "Please put out the light." William McKinley: Moments

before he died, he was whispering the words of "Nearer, My God to Thee." Grover Cleveland: "I have tried so hard to do so right." Rutherford B. Hayes: "I know that I'm going to where Lucy is." Ulysses S.

Grant: "Water." Abraham Lincoln: "They won't think anything of it," spoken in response to wife Mary's question as to whether he thought the audience would mind if they held hands.

8D PORT WAYNE NEWS-SENTINEL • Mon. Feb. 15, 1988  
EAR SIDE □ Gary Larson

The Journal-Gazette

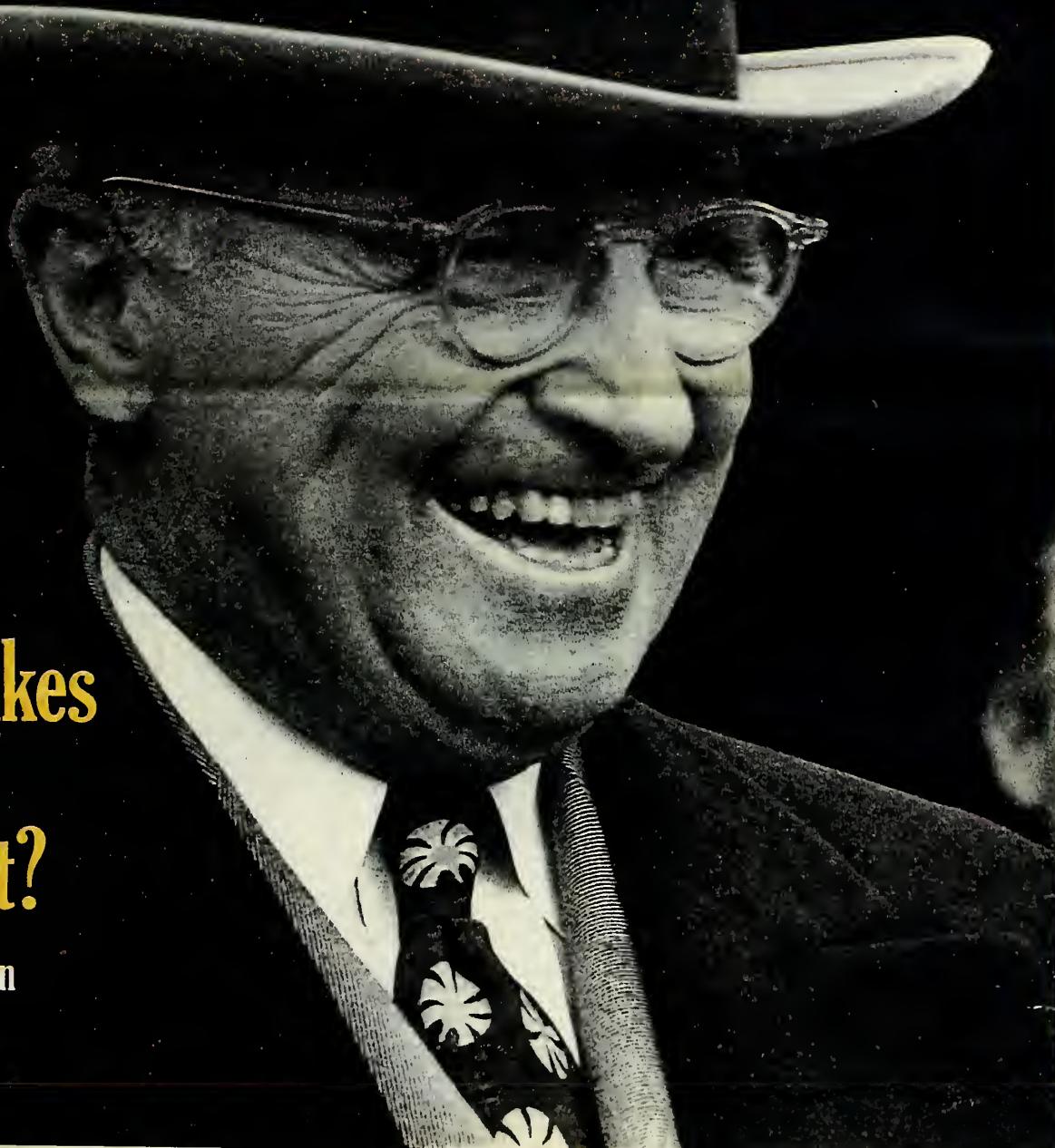
# PARADE

The 8 Best,  
The 8 Worst—  
And Why

## What Makes A Good President?

By Harry S. Truman

From A Forthcoming Book  
Edited By Margaret Truman  
And Scott Meredith



# The 8 Best Presidents, The 8 Worst Presidents -And Why

*My father began work on this book, "More Plain Speaking," shortly after he left the White House in 1953. He dictated a lot of the basic material to his secretaries, wrote some of it on scraps of paper and dictated a lot to my mother and me. Eventually he ended up with what probably amounted to a couple of thousand pages, and from that material I've shaped the present book, which expresses in plain and simple language his viewpoint on the Presidency, various Presidents and the way the American government functions and operates.*

—MARGARET TRUMAN

**I**VE OFTEN SAID THAT there are a million men in this country who could have done the job I did as President, or who were qualified for the job. I think that's true, but they didn't have the chance. A great many men who are well qualified to be Chief Executive have been passed up and overlooked. It takes luck, conditions that prevail at the time and, when the right moment comes, ability to meet that situation.

I'll have a lot to say about some of the men who became Presidents and whose election was a good thing for the country, and about some of the men who were elected to the Presidency and shouldn't have been, and about Presidents and the Presidency and the government and the country in general. I guess as good a way as any to start is to write out a list of the men I think were our best Presidents, and a few who might possibly have been our worst.

## THE EIGHT BEST



**GEORGE WASHINGTON**  
There isn't any question about Washington's greatness. If his Administration had been a failure, there would have been no United

States. He had all the background that caused him to know how to make it work, because he had worked under the Continental Congress. Some Presidents have limited their roles to being administrators of the laws without being leaders. But Washington was both a great administrator and a great leader.

I guess, in fact, that the only anti-Washington thing I can say is that he made a mistake when he established the precedent of the two-term limitation on the Presidency, and even there he had a good personal reason for wanting that, at least for himself. He was attacked viciously by the press of his day; he was called so many terrible things that he told friends even during his first term that he wasn't going to run again. But Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and Alexander Hamilton persuaded him to go ahead and serve a second term, and finally he did. After he'd gotten through his second term, though, he made up his mind that he just wouldn't take it anymore, and he quit. That established the precedent, though of course it wasn't actually law until it became necessary for Franklin Delano Roosevelt to stay on for four terms because of the World War, and—I won't mince words here—the Republican 80th Con-

gress took a sort of revenge on Roosevelt's memory because he'd made a lot of those people look bad by comparison.

### THOMAS JEFFERSON

Jefferson also had his share of press criticism and people who didn't like him, and I wonder how many people remember our history and realize how close Jefferson came to losing the election in 1800, and how close Aaron Burr came to being our third President, which would have been just as bad as electing Richard Nixon today.\*

Jefferson was called a runaway President because he pushed through our purchase of Louisiana over a lot of opposition. I think Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana was one of the best decisions ever made because, if we hadn't taken over Louisiana, then either Britain, France or Spain would have owned it and our country would have ended at the Mississippi River, whereas the greatest part of our development has been by our ability to expand beyond the Mississippi. I don't like this talk about runaway Presidents, because the truth is that a President just does what he has to do.

\*My father wrote these lines sometime before Richard Nixon was, in fact, elected President. He decided, however, not to change the sentence. He said his comments on Mr. Nixon would be unprintable.

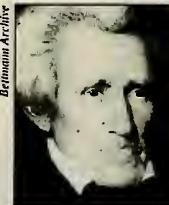


Frederick Lewis

### JAMES KNOX POLK

This choice may surprise some people. Polk isn't much thought about these days. First, he exercised his powers of the Presidency as I think they should be exercised. He was President during the Mexican War, in an age when the terrible burden of making decisions in a war was entirely in the hands of the President. And when that came about, he decided that that was much more important than going to parties and shaking hands with people.

Second, he bought the Southwest part of the country for just about the same price that Jefferson paid for Louisiana; and third, he did something that most of the rest of us who were Presidents weren't able to do: He decided when he went in there that he would only serve one term, and that's what he did. He knew exactly what he wanted to do in a specified period of time and did it, and when he got through with it he went home. He said a moving thing on his retirement: "I now retire as a servant and regain my position as a sovereign." He was right, absolutely right. I've been through it, and I know.



### ANDREW JACKSON

Jackson was elected after a period of what they called in James Monroe's time "the era of good feeling." Well, when the era of good feeling got to feeling too good, meaning that the people and the government became too

**B Y H A R R Y S. T R U M A N**



Truman and Roosevelt in 1944. "It took a President who understood the U.S. and the world to start to get the country on its feet in the Depression."

### THE BEST

George Washington  
Thomas Jefferson  
Andrew Jackson  
James K. Polk  
Abraham Lincoln  
Grover Cleveland  
Woodrow Wilson  
Franklin D. Roosevelt

### THE WORST

Zachary Taylor  
Franklin Pierce  
James Buchanan  
Ulysses S. Grant  
Benjamin Harrison  
Warren G. Harding  
Calvin Coolidge  
Dwight D. Eisenhower



Truman greets Eisenhower in 1951. "I'm not one of his admirers. He acted as if I was his enemy instead of the fellow who'd had the job just before him."



#### ABRAHAM LINCOLN

He was a strong executive who saved the government, saved the United States. He was a President who understood people, and, when it came time to make decisions, he was willing to take the responsibility and make those decisions, no matter how difficult they were. He knew how to treat people and how to make a decision stick, and that's why his is regarded as such a great Administration.

Carl Sandburg and a lot of others have tried to make something out of Lincoln that he wasn't. He was a decent man, a good politician, and a great President, and they've tried to build up things that he never even thought about. I'll bet a dollar and a half that if you read Sandburg's biography of Lincoln, you'll find things put into Lincoln's mouth and mind that never even occurred to him. He was a good man who was in the place where he ought to have been at the time important events were taking place, but when they write about him as though he belongs in the pantheon of the gods, that's not the man he really was. He was the best kind of ordinary man, and when I say that he was an ordinary man, I mean that as high praise, not depreciation. That's the highest praise you can give a man, that he's one of the people and becomes distinguished in the service that he gives other people. He was one of the people, and he wanted to stay that way. And he was that way until the day he died. One of the reasons he was assassinated was because he didn't feel important enough to have the proper guards around him at Ford's Theatre.

#### GROVER CLEVELAND

At least he was a great President in his first term; in his second term, he wasn't the same. Cleveland was to begin with. Cleveland re-established the Presidency by being not only a Chief Executive but also a leader. Cleveland spent most of his time in his first term working on bills that came from the Congress, and he vetoed a tremendous pile of bills that were passed strictly for the purpose of helping out people who had voted for the Republican ticket. He also saw to it that a lot of laws passed, if he felt those laws were needed for the good of the general public, even if the laws weren't popular with some members of the Congress.

For the most part, however, Cleveland was a considerably less impressive man in his second term. He had a terrible time with strikes, and he called out the soldiers, and they fired on the strikers. It was also during Cleveland's second term that a number of smaller companies got together and formed great big companies for the suppression of competition. That's why I say Cleveland was a great President only in his first term.

#### WOODROW WILSON

I've been asked which Presidents served as models for me when I was President myself, and the answer is that there were three of them. Two were Jefferson and Jackson, and the third was Woodrow Wilson. In many ways



Wilson was the greatest of the greats. He established the Federal Reserve Board. He established the Federal Trade Commission. He didn't make a great publicity stunt of being a trustbuster, the way Teddy Roosevelt did, but the trust situation was never really met until Wilson became President. Wilson also established the League of Nations, which didn't succeed but which served as a blueprint for the United Nations, which might succeed yet, despite its problems.

All a good President tries to do is accomplish things for the good of the people, and if you want to call that liberal, then I'm with you. I guess the best way to describe Wilson, if I've got to use a label, is to say that he was a common-sense liberal. He wasn't one of these synthetic liberals who are always talking liberalism and who act some other way, and he wasn't one of these screaming liberals who aren't very liberal to people who think differently from the way they do. He was a genuine liberal who used his heart and his brain.



#### FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

It goes without saying that I was highly impressed by him for a thousand reasons, but a main reason is that he inherited a situation that was almost as bad as the one Lincoln had, and he dealt with it. And he was always able to make decisions. Presidents have to make decisions if they're going to get anywhere, and those Presidents who couldn't make decisions are the ones who caused all the trouble.

It took a President who understood the United States and the world, like Roosevelt, to come along and start to

get the country back on its feet again in the Depression, and also to make Americans remember that we're a world power and have to act like a world power.

We also, of course, got the United Nations as a result of Roosevelt's Administration and mine, which is exactly what the League of Nations was supposed to be in the first place. I'm not saying that the United Nations is a perfect organization, or ever will be. It's far from flawless, and it's weak in many ways. But at least it's a start.

Whenever a President inaugurates a policy that's worthwhile, the chances are that it will carry through sooner or later for the simple reason that we're a two-party government and there are people in both parties with the intelligence to see both sides of a question. And whenever a President inaugurates a policy which is truly for the welfare and the benefit of the country, and his successor comes along and tries to overturn it, there isn't any likelihood that that successor President will succeed in burying it forever.

### THE EIGHT WORST

Now let me flip the coin and write about some Presidents of the opposite variety. I guess, if I were labeling these chapters, I'd call this one "Some Presidents We Could Have Done Without."

#### ZACHARY TAYLOR

He was the President immediately after Polk, and from the beginning of his Administration in 1849 until the end of James Buchanan's Ad-



continued

## TRUMAN/continued

ministration in 1861, we had the same sort of situation, a period of stagnation. The four Presidents in that period were Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan. I think it was one of the worst periods the country ever went through.

Taylor was a field general, one of the great ones. But when he became President of the United States, I don't think he knew what to do. I can't be charitable and say that he failed to carry out his program; he didn't have any program to carry out.

He was just elected as a military figure, and he spent his time in office behaving like a retired general. He became expert at doing nothing. Millard Fillmore, Taylor's Vice President, became President when Taylor died in 1850. He was another of those Presidents who did nothing worth pointing out.



### FRANKLIN PIERCE

A Democrat from New Hampshire, he had even features and curly hair and was one of the best-looking men ever in the White House. He was also one of the most vain. But, though he looked the way people who make movies think a President should look, he didn't pay any more attention to business as President of the United States than the man in the moon, and he really made a mess of things. Though he was a Northerner, he believed in slavery, pretty much, and once said in a speech, "I believe that involuntary servitude, as it exists in different States of the Confederacy, is recognized by the Constitution."



### JAMES BUCHANAN

He was one more do-nothing President. The worst thing about that is that he came just before the Civil War and had a lot to do with bringing it on. He ended up throwing everything onto Lincoln's lap.

He also wrote a message on the veto of the first land grants and the first land grant colleges that's a comic masterpiece. He was more or less for free land grants himself but didn't really have 'guts to go against its opponents, so simply vetoed the bill and put it off into his indefinite future. The thing that was comic was that he also had to veto land grant colleges, and he justified this by explaining that the country didn't require further education. In fact, the old fool went on to say educated people were too hard to handle, and he thought here were too many already!

Culver



### ULYSSES SIMPSON GRANT

His period in office seems to prove the theory that we can coast along for eight years without a President. Well, of course, we also did it with Eisenhower.

I think Grant did what he had to do all through the Civil War and did it well. He came to accept Lee's surrender with the mud still on his uniform, instead of acting like a God and a conqueror the way Douglas MacArthur sometimes did when I was Vice President and President.

His Administration was one of the most corrupt in our history, but he didn't even know all the crooked business was going on when he was President of the United States. It's hard even to imagine that, but it's true.\*

Grant's period as President was one of the low points in our history. I don't think he knew very much about what the President's job was except that he was commander in chief of the armed forces. He was pretty naive or ignorant about everything else.

\*I wish my father were around today to give me his views, and to tell me what he believes or doesn't believe, about the Reagan Administration and Iranagate.

Culver



### BENJAMIN HARRISON

I tend to pair up Benjamin Harrison and Dwight Eisenhower, because they're the two Presidents I can think of who most preferred laziness to labor. They didn't work at all. Harrison was a general in the Army of the United States and in the Civil War, and he just wanted to retire as a general, just as Eisenhower did. The only thing that's remembered about him today is that he had a billion-dollar Congress during his term in office.

### WARREN GAMALIEL HARDING

His Administration was the most corrupt in our nation's history, and it was a lot worse than Grant's.

Harding didn't really understand the responsibilities with which he was faced. I don't enjoy making detrimental remarks about a man who had been President of the United States, but he never did know what the Presidency was all about. His previous work as a Senator and as a newspaper publisher just didn't seem to give him any insight into the job. I don't think there's any point in editorializing on the Teapot Dome scandal and the other scandals of the Harding Administration, either. They speak for themselves.



### CALVIN COOLIDGE

As Vice President, he took over when Harding died in office. He was quite a character, and there are a lot of funny stories about him, but I guess pretty nearly the only thing I like about him are those stories. He believed that the less a President did, the better it was for the country, and I don't agree with that at all. He sat with his feet in his desk drawer and did nothing. He just sat there and signed bills when they came up, and vetoed a few, and that's all there was to it. Coolidge didn't think the President ought to interfere in any way with the policies of the legislative branch, and yet the President is the man who makes policy, or should make policy, for the whole country.



H. Armstrong Roberts

### DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

He's the final President in my no-enthusiasm category, and I've sprinkled enough comments throughout the pages before this one so that you know that I'm not one of

Mr. Eisenhower's admirers. Even if I say so myself, I tried so hard to be pleasant and cooperative when I was turning the office over to Eisenhower, but he acted as if I was his enemy instead of the fellow who'd had the job just before him.

It's interesting that a single thing, that great smile of Eisenhower's, gave him the worldwide and lifelong reputation of being a sunny and amiable man, when those of us who knew him well were all too aware that he was essentially a surly, angry and disagreeable man, and I don't just mean to me, either.

None of that is important, of course; the important thing is that he didn't do a thing as President.

It just isn't the case that when, as I believe Eisenhower did, a President thinks that he's a kind of monarch or king who should be above everything that happens in the world and in the country, the Congress will do all the work. That's bad not only for the Presidency; it's bad for the country and the world. The Chief Executive has to transact the business of the country: He has to provide leadership, and he has to have a program and the guts and ability to put it over. And Eisenhower never made any effort to put forward the leadership to which he was entitled, and he didn't have any program.

## What Makes Good Presidents Good

NOW, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE things I believe a man has to have inside him, and the things he has to do or not do, in order to be a good President.

First and most important, a President must be strong, particularly where there's the temptation, as there so often is, to look the other way and do nothing because the matter at hand is unpopular or unpleasant or difficult to attempt or accomplish. It may well be true that the best government is the least government, but when it comes to the point where an emergency arises, or when something has to be done (and sometimes in a hell of a hurry), then you want somebody in charge who knows how to do the job.

You might think this is obvious, but it really isn't, because the odd fact here is that there are times when the general public seems to prefer weakness in a President.

I happen to be in a minority in my opinion of that man who came after Coolidge, Herbert Hoover. I know most people think he was a poor President and practically caused the Depression single-handed, but I think he was actually a President who tried hard and did the best he possibly could but was faced with difficulties he just wasn't able to overcome at the time. I think he and his Administration were blamed for things which were not their fault, things which were coming on ever since Wilson left office and Harding became President in 1921.

Equally important, a good President must have the ability to come up with new ideas and an understanding of how the

implementation of these ideas will affect not only the present but also the future. To put it a different way, a good President has got to have an understanding of history.

The next essential quality is the ability to convince the Congress to go along with his ideas, and, of course, also convince the general public that his ideas are good—particularly when, as often happens, a lot of legislators and a large segment of the general public don't think much of the ideas when they're first presented. And with this quality must go the ability to be able to determine and understand exactly the way the people are thinking.

A good President should also have the ability to continue and further the good programs of former Presidents and not try to abandon them simply because the previous President, or Presidents before that one, belonged to a different political party.

My definition of a leader in a free country is a man who can persuade people to do what they don't want to do, or do what they're too lazy to do, and like it. Of course, you've got to have a program that you yourself believe is the best you can get together.

And, to get his programs over, a good President must inform the people of exactly what he's trying to do and keep on informing them. The dictators of the world say that if you tell a lie often enough, people will believe it. Well, if you tell the truth often enough, they'll believe it and go along with you.

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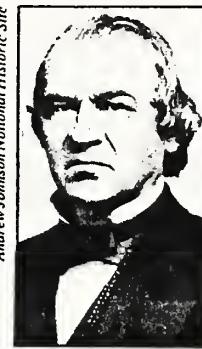
# Pontiac We Build Excitement

## Intelligence Report CONTINUED

### They Never Went To College



Andrew Johnson National Historic Site



Andrew Johnson National Historic Site

Eliza McCardle and Andrew Johnson: Our 17th President never attended school, instead learned from future First Lady

**O**f the 39 men who have served to date as President of the United States, nine (but only one of them in this century) never attended college. How many of these Presidents can you name?

They were, in order: George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Grover Cleveland and Harry Truman.

Of these nine men, four consistently have been included by historians when compiling their lists of the top 10 U.S. Presidents. The 10 usually are ranked in the following order:

- 1) Abraham Lincoln
- 2) George Washington
- 3) Franklin D. Roosevelt
- 4) Thomas Jefferson
- 5) Theodore Roosevelt
- 6) Woodrow Wilson
- 7) Andrew Jackson
- 8) Harry Truman
- 9) James K. Polk
- 10) John Adams

In point of fact, the United States Constitution mandates no educational requirements for the position of President. Our 17th President, Andrew Johnson, was bound by law early in life to work as a tailor's apprentice in North Carolina, and he did not attend school for a single day. When he was 18, Johnson married 16-year-old Eliza McCardle, and it was she who helped to teach the future President how to read and write.



October 28, 2006

**Q&A: MARK MATTHEWS**

## Social studies teacher discusses Lincoln

**By Melanie D. Hayes**

[melanie.d.hayes@indystar.com](mailto:melanie.d.hayes@indystar.com)

October 28, 2006

Mark Matthews, the Carmel Middle School social studies department chairman, on Friday talked about Abraham Lincoln at a state conference.

Matthews, 44, Westfield, is originally from Loogootee. He spoke to the Indiana Council for the Social Studies fall conference.

The teacher answered some questions for The Carmel Star by e-mail on Thursday.

**Question: How long have you been a teacher?**

**Answer:** 23 years, 14 in Carmel.

**Q: Why did you choose to become a social studies teacher?**

**A:** I have always loved history. The stories are so compelling. I particularly love U.S. history because it's our shared story. As a child, I grew interested in history by traveling the country and talking with my father, a World War II veteran.

**Q: How were you chosen to present at the Indiana Council for the Social Studies?**

**A:** I was chosen to present at this conference as a result of the scholarly work I've done on President Lincoln and my involvement with the "We the People" project and the Indiana Humanities Council.

**Q: What was your presentation about?**

**A:** The presentation is about Abraham Lincoln's youth in Indiana. He lived in Southern Indiana during his formative years, from the ages of 7 to 21. He could truly say of Indiana, "Here I grew up." . . . The more you know about Lincoln, however, the more you appreciate how growing up in our state influenced his career.

**Q: Why are you so interested in Lincoln?**

**A:** I grew up in Southern Indiana, less than an hour from Lincoln's Indiana home. I visited it several times as a child and grew interested in all the stories about President Lincoln. As I got more interested in Civil War history, it was natural to want to know more about this president who led us through such an incredibly difficult period of our history. Lincoln is a fascinating character filled with many mysteries and contradictions. His greatness is unquestioned, yet he is certainly flawed, like all of us.

**Q: How does Lincoln compare to other U.S. presidents?**

**A:** Lincoln is clearly one of our great presidents. He led our nation through the most difficult times imaginable. . . . He was not afraid to take action, to use broad executive powers to see us through this crisis, or to speak his mind. His speeches and writing show the intellect, the curiosity, the bravery that made him a truly great president. His Indiana years are an important part of that legacy, and I'm excited to share it.

## Week in Review

## Making History

Combing the Century  
For a President to Honor

By TODD S. PURDUM

WASHINGTON

**T**HE President's character, his contemporary critic wrote, was a "non-describable, chameleon-colored thing called prudence," which was "in many cases a substitute for principle" and "so nearly allied to hypocrisy that it easily slides into it."

The critic was Thomas Paine, the Revolutionary pamphleteer. The President was George Washington, at the end of his second term in 1796. Today, Washington is celebrated as the father of his country, the pretext for Macy's "Winter Fashion Clearance," and a swell excuse to sleep late tomorrow morning on the Federal holiday that marks his birth.

As the 20th century lurches to an end with the prospect of producing, at best, only one more President (barring death in office), it is tempting to wonder who among this uneven crop might ever join the 18th-century Washington and his 19th-century fellow Februarian, Abraham Lincoln, in the rarified ranks of Monday holidays.

"We do seem to be at the point where Lord Bryce wrote in the late 19th century that it was impossible for a great man to become President," said David Herbert Donald, the retired Harvard historian whose new biography of Lincoln will be published next fall.

How can a culture that picks apart its Presidents' infirmities, infidelities and infelicities, that looks for dye in the hair or clay on the toes and writes *romans à clef* on dysfunctional First Families and graphic sex with Marilyn Monroe, compete for heroes with one that let a friendly parson fabricate a fable about a cherry tree and the truth?

Fans of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Jan. 30), Harry S. Truman (May 8), Dwight D. Eisenhower (Oct. 14) or even Bill Clinton (Aug. 19) might take comfort from the reality that Americans "have always known that Presidents had feet of clay," said Fred I. Greenstein, a professor of politics at Princeton University.

"Presidential greatness is sort of nonsensical," said Mr. Greenstein, who confessed that his studies on Eisenhower's "hidden hand" style of quasi-military management have done their share to pump up Ike's Washingtonesque reputation, and diminish J.F.K.'s by contrast.

"Because greatness is a value judgment, and even disasters have their redeeming qualities," he said, "there's a kind of yo-yo quality to the whole thing."

## Generational Favorites

Tastes change, and historians are fickle and partial to their own generations. J. G. Randall, Professor Donald's mentor and the pre-eminent Lincoln scholar of the mid-20th century, ranked Woodrow Wilson (Dec. 28) even higher, in part because Randall came of intellectual age in the progressive ferment of Wilson's "New Freedom."

The current leading candidate for 20th century canonization is surely F.D.R., reviled by many during



Mark Golbaum

# Which Leader To Honor?

*Continued from page 1*

his record-setting 12-year tenure as "that man in the White House," and lionized today by Ronald Reagan, Newt Gingrich and Mr. Clinton alike.

Yet 50 years after his death, the man who led the country through the Depression and World War II has — as he wished — no memorial larger than the size of his desk, a marble slab near the National Archives.

And in a country now prone to celebrate its *pluribus* at least as much as its *unum*, any effort to enshrine another dead white male would surely get ensnared in the thorns of racial-ethnic-gender sensitivities, and perhaps result in demands for an Eleanor Roosevelt Day instead.

On that score, too, there has long been turmoil. Even before Washington left office, the anti-Federalists, or Jeffersonians, objected to public celebration of the President's birthday as idolatrous, and defeated a resolution calling for Congress to adjourn in its honor. By the centennial of his birth in 1832, such partisan divisions had dissolved and Feb. 22 became an occasion for serious midwinter civic and social events.

Lincoln's path to sainthood was even more tortured (in part, of course, because he died on Good Friday, 1865, at an assassin's hand, not at home in bed at Mount Vernon).

"Within eight hours of his murder Republican Congressmen in secret caucus agreed that 'his death is a godsend to our cause,'" because Andrew Johnson would punish the errant South in ways that Lincoln was resisting, Professor Donald wrote in "Lincoln Reconsidered," his collection of cool-eyed essays in 1961. "But politicians of all parties were apparently startled by the extent of the national grief over Lincoln, and, politician-like, they decided to capitalize upon it."

## Regional Fervors

On Feb. 12, 1866, both houses of Congress convened to commemorate the Emancipator's birth and hear the historian George Bancroft praise him as a leader who was molded by events rather than one who made the times take shape in accordance with his will. But even today, though it is a legal holiday in many Northern states and sometimes combined with Washington's in the twofer known as "Presidents' Day," Lincoln's birthday is not celebrated officially in a single state of the Old Confederacy.

Washington, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Columbus remain the only individuals with official Federal holidays of their own, and even these technically apply only to Federal workers, unless matched by the states.

For his part, Mr. Clinton said in a Presidents' Day interview with C-SPAN to be broadcast tomorrow, that of all his predecessors he would wish to talk to Lincoln most, because "his personal growth in the job was extraordinary and his ability to distill all the forces at work into clear and powerful language was so great."

In the sulphurous era of what he called instantaneous "hyperdemocracy" and "hyperinformation," Mr. Clinton also pined for the idealism of the martyred Kennedy, whose hand he shook as a starry-eyed teenager in the Rose Garden he now looks out on every morning, and under whom, he said, "there was a sense of confidence in the American people and a sense of trust in their elected leaders."

But Kennedy's reputation has suffered in the Age of Revelation and his birthday (May 29) is not only too close to Memorial Day but irrevocably overshadowed by Nov. 22.

By contrast, the only 20th century President who would make a February trifecta has a newly popular — and relevant — profile in the Hour of Newt: Ronald Reagan himself (Feb. 6). Of course, everyone knows an actor could never be ...

CHARLES FRIED

The Boston Globe

## The limits of law

By Charles Fried | October 23, 2007

JACK GOLDSMITH'S recent book, "The Terror Presidency," has much to teach us. Goldsmith rehearses at length the departures from constitutional constraints by Abraham Lincoln and FDR when both were faced with circumstances that threatened catastrophe: in Lincoln's case for the nation, in Roosevelt's for mankind. Both "did what they had to do" and no one but a fool or pedant would today fault them for having done it. Soon after these actions were taken, they were acknowledged as bold and necessary.

Contrast that with the widespread reaction to President Bush's actions in respect to electronic surveillance, detention of hostile combatants, their rendition to countries and regimes less scrupulous than ours, and harsh interrogation techniques.

Lincoln justified himself to Congress in respect to his suspension of habeas corpus with the cry: "Are all the laws, but one, to go unexecuted, and the government itself to go to pieces, lest that one be violated?" And consider Korematsu, the infamous Japanese exclusion case. In December 1944, the majority of the Supreme Court endorsed not only the 1942 order confining persons of Japanese ancestry in detention camps, but Korematsu's conviction for violating it. Justices Frank Murphy and Owen Roberts condemned both. Justice Robert Jackson was ambivalent in his dissent: "It would be impracticable and dangerous idealism to expect or insist that each specific military command in an area of probable operations will conform to conventional tests of constitutionality. When an area is so beset that it must be put under military control at all, the paramount consideration is that its measures be successful rather than legal. A military commander may overstep the bounds of constitutionality, and it is an incident. But if we review and approve, that passing incident becomes the doctrine of the Constitution."

Today, one would probably not get away with Jackson's equivocation. There would be independent counsel prosecutions, congressional investigation, civil lawsuits, imprisonment, and maybe even impeachment of failed politicians.

This perplexity should not diminish our devotion to the rule of law, but it does drive us back to Aristotle: "In everything the wise man does not seek greater precision than the subject allows." Are we not operating at the margins of the very concept of law - that is what I take Lincoln's rhetorical question to imply. Aristotle continues: "What creates the problem is that the reasonable [epieikes] is not the legally just, but a correction of legal justice. . . . Where the legislator has erred by oversimplicity, it is right to correct the omission. . . . And this is the nature of the reasonable . . . ."

I think of the cases that trouble us today as the extreme tails of a normal distribution. There are instances that are within the law's scope, but are so trivial that it passes all reason to extend the law to them. The impeachment, only the second in our history, of President Clinton for his perjury about his relation to Monica Lewinsky was like that. Roosevelt, Lincoln, and probably Bush were operating at the other extreme end of the normal distribution.

And how are we to tell when we are at those tails? To ask for a formula is to (re)commit the error that Aristotle warned against. It is a matter of prudence and reasonableness. One of the horrors of the Independent Counsel mentality was that discretion, the correction of the legal by the reasonable, has become almost impossible. Every incident becomes a precedent. And what was tragedy in Watergate and Iran-Contra became farce in the Lewinsky affair.

What must happen if we are not to have an endless Orestean cycle of investigations and prosecutions with each shift in power is a return to a politics of reasonableness. Lincoln famously reported to Congress and sought legitimating legislation, although he did not get it until 1863, while over 13,000 assorted rebels, Copperheads, and nuisances languished in detention. Roosevelt had another strategy. As Jack Goldsmith points out, he appointed two prominent Republicans to his Cabinet. He talked, manipulated, argued, and persuaded his opponents, the doubters in Congress, and the public in general.

And in the end Lincoln and Roosevelt were lucky. They chose their transgressions - if transgressions they were - well and sparingly. They did not seek to provoke - only to succeed. In fairly short order, it became obvious that they were right. Bush, through a combination of bad judgment, bad advice, and bad luck, had made the case for discretion and reasonableness disreputable. To paraphrase St. Paul: judgment, advice, and luck, and of these three, luck may be the

**Charles Fried** teaches constitutional law at Harvard Law School. His most recent book is "Modern Liberty and the Limits of Government." ■

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# Condé Nast Portfolio.com

## Presidential Moxie

by Roger Lowenstein November 2007 Issue

This author musters a surprising, even controversial, roster of courageous men in the Oval Office. But what defines courage? Let the arguments begin.



Illustration by: Gray318

### A Higher Purpose

By Thomas J. Whalen

(Ivan R. Dee, 320 pages, \$28)

For presidential buffs already tired of the 2008 campaign, historian Thomas J. Whalen's *A Higher Purpose* is likely to be more riveting than anything written about the current crop of candidates.

Who could be bored with accounts of Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy?

Whalen offers nine sketches of presidents in action that, he says, demonstrate that very rare commodity: courage.

His choices will surely start arguments, and that, I suspect, is the point. Thus he includes Gerald Ford pardoning Richard Nixon, which will anger those inclined to a conspiratorial view of history. Following Nixon's resignation, Ford was viewed as a humble man, a perfect antidote to Watergate. But the pardon, intended to get the country past the trauma of the scandal, ruined him. Ford never regained his standing in the polls and was defeated in his bid for reelection two years later. In my view, this meets the author's test of putting "conscience over expediency."

Another apt choice is F.D.R., whom Whalen lauds for supplying destroyers to the British to fight the Nazis when the U.S. was not yet at war and America Firsters were decrying the president as a warmonger. F.D.R., of course, managed to get reelected, but Whalen wisely does not insist that all his presidents suffer at the polls for their good deeds. Sometimes, he notes, courage pays.

Also, his compelling account of Harry Truman's sacking of the insubordinate General Douglas MacArthur makes one grateful that, at the very least, today's generals know their place in the constitutional order (even if today's presidents don't).

Whalen's inclusion of J.F.K. is more problematic. Given that the book's subtitle is *Profiles in Presidential Courage*—a self-conscious nod toward J.F.K.'s Pulitzer Prize-winning work—and that Whalen has already written a book-length study of Kennedy, one is rather on the lookout for signs of Camelot adoration. Here, Whalen cites Kennedy for ordering the University of Alabama to admit two black students, a high point of his presidency.

The question is whether J.F.K. was inspired by a belated pang of conscience or a pragmatic assessment that the political landscape was changing. It is no doubt true, as Whalen says, that Kennedy was sickened by pictures of Alabama police unleashing dogs on blacks. By then, however, much of the country was also sickened. And as Whalen notes, Kennedy failed to feel sick when blacks were being beaten and worse during the first 29 months of his administration. But better late than never.

The selection of Lincoln for the Emancipation Proclamation would be unremarkable, except for Whalen's suggestion that Lincoln freed the slaves largely because he thought it would help win the Civil War. Indeed, Lincoln hesitated to issue the proclamation earlier, fearing that it would lose him the support of border states. Whalen quotes the 16th president as admitting, "I want to have God on my side, but I must have Kentucky."

Lincoln surely must be on the list, but perhaps his decision to fight the war in the first place was the more courageous one. Remember that his predecessor, James Buchanan, was of a mind to let the South secede.

If I have dwelled on Whalen's selections, it's because his historical accounts themselves are superficial. He selects good snippets but familiar ones, and his portraits are rather conventional. This tendency serves him poorly in his one truly bad pick: Andrew Jackson, for scuttling the Bank of the United States. Old Hickory waged a war against the country's young central bank under the dubious premise that bankers were the enemies of "farmers, mechanics, and laborers." What a lovely and ignorant view. Actually, as Daniel Webster noted at the time, Jackson used his power to "inflame" the poorer classes against the rich. Jackson's prejudices were understandable, given his 18th-century backwoods origins, but after 200 years of at least *some* progress in economic thought, Whalen should not have fallen for such a crude economic populist.

The author doesn't insist that his heroes always acted courageously; F.D.R., for one, was hardly immune to political calculation. This raises a question that Whalen does not address: Can one identify the raw material of courage in advance? Does Hillary Clinton have it? Does Mitt Romney? It seems that Churchill was courageous his entire life; Gerald Ford rose to the occasion.

By focusing on moral courage as distinct from bodily courage, Whalen misses a possible connective thread. It is at least interesting to note, as Whalen does not, that a great many of his heroes were also physically valiant. One thinks of Jackson in wartime, Lincoln nobly enduring depression, the once sickly Theodore Roosevelt going on safari ("I hope the first lion who sees him does his duty" was J.P. Morgan's acerbic observation after T.R. had busted up his railroad conglomerate), as well as F.D.R. refusing to surrender to polio, and J.F.K. rescuing his shipwrecked PT boat crew and later maintaining a cheerful front as president when seriously ill with Addison's disease. Perhaps spiritual courage begins in one's guts.

This is further ammunition for those who believe that George W. Bush—an unenthusiastic National Guardsman who avoided Vietnam duty—does not have the right stuff. Whalen's heavy-handed preface is dedicated to debunking the notion that Bush's Iraqi escapade qualifies him as courageous. Much as I agree, this was better left unsaid: Besides its partisan tilt, which seems inappropriate in a work of history, Whalen's foray into real-time politics is also at odds with his thesis. The guiding leitmotif of *A Higher Purpose*, after all, is that courage often goes unrecognized in the moment.

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